

July 9, 2008

Dear Chairman Martin:

As an economic development professional of a Kentucky county that has recently implemented a public broadband project, I believe it is my duty to give you a first-hand account of the support and assistance that ConnectKentucky has brought to our municipality and the rural citizens of our county. I understand there are allegations that ConnectKentucky does not support municipal broadband projects; however, this is simply untrue.

ConnectKentucky worked with us, the Washington Fiscal Court and the City of Springfield, to determine the best solution for expanding broadband into the rural areas of Springfield and Washington County. While it is evident that ConnectKentucky works with local officials and broadband providers in Kentucky to bring the highest bandwidth solutions to each citizen and business, ConnectKentucky is also realistic enough to understand that there is not always a viable business case for fiber to every home – which was the case for us – we simply did not have the funding for a fiber optic system, nor did our citizens want to be taxed for it. Fiber was simply not a feasible or sustainable option. And so ConnectKentucky listened to our needs and recommended a fixed wireless system to bring broadband to our residents and businesses who had nothing but dial-up for the foreseeable future.

When we needed a partner in this effort to provide the broadband services, ConnectKentucky introduced us to a wireless Internet service provider, KyWiMax – a small, Kentucky-based company which has developed successful wireless solutions through other projects in Boyle, Lincoln, and Garrard Counties.

But ConnectKentucky did not stop with a recommendation and introduction. Using the detailed maps that they create, ConnectKentucky conducted an extensive engineering assessment of our county's unserved areas, identifying vertical assets such as water towers and existing cell towers that could be used for the network. And as a result, we have been able to construct a network without building any additional towers, using our existing resources in partnership with Springfield Water and Sewer and cellular companies. It was ConnectKentucky who brought all of these players together and conducted the technical work to enable the project's success. ConnectKentucky did not charge us for any of this work, of course, because this is part of what they do for local officials throughout our state.

The broadband project implementation is well underway. At project completion, over 90% of Washington County's households will have access to broadband. That's up from 50% of households just last year. Many residents and businesses are now using broadband for education, healthcare, government services, working from home, buying and selling products online, and a whole host of other activities that dramatically improves their quality of life.

As you work to determine the best course for FCC action in mapping broadband availability, I encourage you to develop policies that will encourage public-private partnerships like ConnectKentucky to continue to thrive. These grassroots-led programs not only do an excellent job of mapping broadband availability, but they also provide a tremendous resource to local governments as we work to find information technology solutions for our citizens.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Hal Goode  
Springfield-Washington Economic Development Authority

cc:  
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein  
Commissioner Michael Copps  
Commissioner Robert McDowell  
Commissioner Deborah Tate